

Message Text

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ORIGIN PRS-01

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UNCLAS STATE 183042 TOSEC 080090

FOR HODDING CARTER FROM S/PRS

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: SOPN, OVIP (VANCE, CYRUS R.)

SUBJECT: MORNIGN TRAVELLING PRESS SUMMARY, AUGUST 4

NO. 12

WIRE SERVICES

AP -- BARRY SCHWEID FROM DAMASCUS

LEAD: "SECSTATE VANCE MET ASSAD TODAY, BEGINNING THE TOUGH-
EST ROUND OF TALKS SO FAR IN HIS EFFORT TO WIN APPROVAL OF
A NEW PLAN FOR PRELIMINARY MIDEAST PEACE NEGOTIATIONS."

OTHER POINTS:

-- TALKS OPENED AS SYRIA'S STATE-RUN PRESS COMMENTED SKEP-
TICALLY ON WORKING GROUP PROPOSAL. PRESS REACTION CONTRAS-
TED SHARPLY WITH WARM RECEPTION GIVEN VANCE IN FEBRUARY.
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-- COMMENTARIES APPEARED TO SIGNAL SYRIAN IMPATIENCE OVER
WHAT THEY SEE AS ISRAELI-INITIATED STALLING TACTICS.

-- INFORMED SOURCES SAID ASSAD WAS ANNOYED THAT SADAT DID
NOT CONSULT HIM PRIOR TO MAKING PROPOSAL.

-- PROPOSAL APPEARED DESIGNED TO EVADE PLO ISSUE. ASSAD'S
REACTION UNKNOWN. BEGIN SAID YESTERDAY WORKING GROUP WOULD
BE "A NEGOTIATION FOR A PEACE AGREEMENT BETWEEN US AND OUR
NEIGHBORS."

UPI -- JIM ANDERSON FROM DAMASCUS

LEAD: "PROPOSED PRELIMINARY PEACE CONFERENCE OF MIDEAST
FONMINS NEXT MONTH HINGES ON ASSAD, WHO MEETS SECSTATE
VANCE TODAY."

OTHER POINTS:

-- IN TALKS WITH SADAT, VANCE RAN INTO MAJOR DISAGREEMENT
OVER TIMETABLE FOR ARAB-ISRAELI AGREEMENTS. INSTEAD THEY
PROPOSED WORKING GROUP.

-- PROPOSAL LEFT PLO ISSUE UNCLEAR; NEGATIVE REACTION BY
ASSAD COULD KILL IT.

-- PLO SOURCES SAID ASSAD WOULD CONVEY PLO POSITION TO
VANCE. ARAFAT MET ASSAD YESTERDAY.

-- DIPLOMATS SAY ONE POSSIBLE SOLUTION WOULD BE FOR PLO TO
ACCEPT "THE FRAMEWORK OF THE GENEVA CONFERENCE," AND THUS
TACITLY ACCEPT EXISTENCE OF ISRAEL.
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-- SYRIAN STATE-CONTROLLED PRESS STRESSED TWO SIDES HAD
MANY DIFFICULTIES TO OVERCOME.

REUTERS -- ROY GUTMAN FROM DAMASCUS

LEAD: "SECSTATE VANCE SOUGHT THE SUPPORT TODAY OF ASSAD FOR
CALLING ARAB-ISRAELI TALKS IN NEW YORK NEXT MONTH."

OTHER POINTS:

-- VANCE MET KHADDAM FOR 3 HOURS, THEN SAW ASSAD. MORNING
SESSION DEVOTED TO DETAILED DISCUSSIONS OF US SUBSTANTIVE
AND PROCEDURAL SUGGESTIONS.

-- SOME ARAB SOURCES THOUGHT ASSAD MIGHT ACCEPT WORKING
GROUP PROPOSAL, PROVIDED MEETING ONLY DISCUSSED PROCEDURES
FOR GENEVA. OTHER SOURCES THOUGHT HE WOULD NOT GO ALONG
WITH ANY PLAN WHICH WOULD EXCLUDE THE PLO.

-- VANCE AND SADAT BOTH SAID IN ALEXANDRIA THAT GROUP WOULD
DISCUSS SUBSTANCE AS WELL AS PROCEDURE.

WORKING GROUP APPEARS TO BE STOP-GAP MEASURE IF AGREEMENT
CAN'T BE REACHED TO GO TO GENEVA.

-- SYRIAN PRESS REACTION INDICATED ASSAD MIGHT TAKE HARD
LINE WITH VANCE. HE IS CLOSE TO PALESTINIANS AND HIS
SUPPORT IS CRUCIAL TO ANY PROPOSAL.

NEWSPAPERS

NY TIMES -- BERNARD GWERTZMAN FROM DAMASCUS

LEAD: "SECSTATE VANCE ARRIVED HERE TONIGHT FOR TALKS WITH
PRESIDENT ASSAD THAT COULD DECIDE THE FATE OF THE PROPOSAL
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TO ESTABLISH A WORKING GROUP OF ARAB-ISRAELI FONMINS UNDER
AMERICAN AUSPICES TO DISCUSS MIDEAST ISSUES WITHOUT THE
PARTICIPATION OF THE PLO."

OTHER POINTS:

-- SYRIANS REPORTED TO HAVE MOVED CLOSER TO PLO; RELIABLE
SOURCES SAID THEY DOUBTED ASSAD WOULD AGREE TO PROPOSAL.

-- AWARE OF POSSIBLE NEGATIVE REACTION, VANCE ON PLANE FROM
BEIRUT STRESSED WHILE HE THOUGHT PROPOSAL WAS A GOOD ONE,
IT WAS UP TO ARABS TO MAKE A DECISION ON IT.

-- PALESTINIAN QUESTION CONTINUES TO OCCUPY LIMELIGHT.
SADAT MADE CLEAR THAT IN FACE OF PLO ATTITUDE, NO ALTERNA-
TIVE TO REPRESENTATION AT GENEVA WAS POSSIBLE.

-- ACCORDING TO US SOURCES, "SADAT WAS CONCERNED THAT THERE
WAS NOT ENOUGH AGREEMENT ON SUBSTANTIVE ISSUES AND THAT IF
GENEVA WAS CONVENED SOON, IT WOULD BREAK UP IN SHARP
DISAGREEMENT, WORSENING THE SITUATION."

-- IN BEIRUT, VANCE DISCUSSED FMS CREDITS FOR LEBANESE
ARMY, SITUATION IN SOUTH LEBANON. HE SAID DECISION ON
LATTER IS NOW UP TO LEBANESE.

LA TIMES/BOSTON GLOBE -- OZZIE JOHNSTON FROM DAMASCUS

LEAD: "SECSTATE VANCE YESTERDAY SUBSTANTIALLY WEAKENED HIS
ENDORSEMENT OF AN EGYPTIAN PROPOSAL CALLING FOR PRELIMINARY
ARAB-IRAELI NEGOTIATIONS IN THE FORM OF 'WORKING GROUPS'
BEFORE A FORMAL CONFERENCE IN GENEVA."

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OTHER POINTS:

-- US OFFICIALS FEARFUL THAT PROPOSAL WOULD BE SEEN AS PLOY
TO FINESSE OUTSTANDING PROBLEMS, AND PERHAPS TO SUBSTITUTE
FOR GENEVA CONFERENCE ENTIRELY. "THE AIDES WERE BUSY
YESTERDAY TRYING TO MINIMIZE THE IMPORTANCE OF THE PROPO-

SAL."

-- OFFICIALS CONTINUED TO ENDORSE PROPOSAL AS SENSIBLE IDEA EVEN AS THEY TRIED TO PLAY IT DOWN.

-- AS ADVERSE ARAB REACTION BEGAN TO REACH PARTY, ONE AIDE SAID "WE CAN'T CONTROL EVERYTHING SADAT SAYS AT A NEWS CONFERENCE."

-- OFFICIALS DENIED YESTERDAY THAT AIM OF PROPOSAL WAS TO MOVE INTO SUBSTANTIVE NEGOTIATIONS WITHOUT FACING PLO QUESTION. THEY SAID GROUP WOULD DISCUSS PROCEDURE AS WELL AS SUBSTANCE, AND NOTED THAT PLO ISSUE WOULD HAVE TO BE FACED SOMETIME.

-- SOME US MIDEAST SPECIALISTS WENT SO FAR AS TO DENY VANCE HAD APPROVED SADAT PROPOSAL. VANCE ON WEDNESDAY WAS MUCH MORE CIRCUMSPECT THAN HE HAD BEEN EARLIER. FOR FIRST TIME, HE RAISED POSSIBILITY OTHER ARAB LEADERS MIGHT NOT ACCEPT IT.

-- PROPOSAL IS IN FOR TOUGH SLEDDING IF IT IS INTERPRETED AS DEVICE TO EXCLUDE PLO, BUT PLO EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEMBER TOLD REPORTERS WORKING GROUP MIGHT BE ACCEPTABLE SO LONG AS NO SUBSTANTIVE MATTERS DISCUSSED.

WASH POST -- DON OBERDORFER FROM DAMASCUS

LEAD: "SYRIAN OFFICIALS RECEIVED SECSTATE VANCE HERE TONIGHT WITH LITTLE CEREMONY AND UNDISGUISED SKEPTICISM UNCLASSIFIED

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THAT VANCE IS BRINGING MIDEAST PEACE PROPOSALS THEY CAN ACCEPT."

OTHER POINTS:

-- VANCE-SADAT MEETINGS BELIEVED BY SYRIANS TO HAVE BEEN FAILURE. IF US SUGGESTIONS COULD NOT WIN SADAT'S SUPPORT, THERE WAS LITTLE REASON TO THINK SYRIANS WOULD ACCEPT THEM.

-- ASSAD REFUSED TO PARTICIPATE IN A GENEVA CONFERENCE IN

1973 DESPITE AGREEMENT BY ISRAEL AND OTHER ARABS. ISSUE THEN, AS NOW, WAS PLO PARTICIPATION.

-- ARAFAT MET ASSAD LAST NIGHT. PLO LEADER NOW FLIES TO SAUDI ARABIA, WHERE VANCE WILL GO NEXT WEEK.

-- US OFFICIALS COULD NOT CONFIRM REPORTS THAT SYRIA SIGNED AGREEMENT WITH PLO TO SUPPORT ITS FULL REPRESENTATION AT GENEVA. IN ANY CASE SYRIA--PLO RELATIONS ARE MUCH IMPROVED

SINCE LEBANESE CIVIL WAR.

-- VANCE STRESSED THAT DECISION ON WORKING GROUP IS UP TO THE PARTIES.

-- IN BEIRUT, HE ANNOUNCED THAT US WILLING TO PROVIDE \$100 MILLION FMS CREDITS TO LEBANON. ISRAEL DOES NOT OBJECT TO SALE, BECAUSE IT PREFERS LEBANESE ARMY ON ITS BORDERS TO SYRIAN ARMY OR PLO FORCES.

BALT SUN -- HANK TREWHITT FROM DAMASCUS

LEAD: "SECSTATE VANCE ARRIVED HERE LAST NIGHT FOR TALKS
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WITH ASSAD. EARLIER YESTERDAY, HE OFFERED LEBANON'S FRAGILE GOVERNMENT WIDE SUPPORT RANGING FROM MILITARY AND ECONOMIC AID TO BACKING FOR UN PEACEKEEPING FORCE IN THE SOUTH."

OTHER POINTS:

-- VANCE SEEKING ASSAD'S ASSENT TO SADAT PROPOSAL; WASHINGTON AND TEL AVIV HAVE ALREADY ACCEPTED.

-- PLO LEADERS SAID TO BE CONVINCED ASSAD WOULD CHAMPION THEIR CAUSE AND SCUTTLE WORKING GROUP.

-- GROWING EVIDENCE THAT PROPOSAL HAD TAKEN ON MORE PUBLIC IMPORTANCE THAN VANCE DESIRED. OFFICIALS ON PLANE SAID WORKING GROUP TOOK UP ONLY 20 MINUTES OF 5-HOUR VANCE-SADAT MEETING, AND OTHER NEGOTIATING APPROACHES BEING GIVEN EQUAL EMPHASIS AS MIDEAST TOUR CONTINUES.

-- IN LEBANON, VANCE OFFERED \$100 MILLION FMS CREDITS OVER THREE YEARS, SUBJECT TO CONGRESSIONAL APPROVAL.

-- HE TOLD LEBANESE US WOULD SUPPORT UN PEACEKEEPING FORCE FOR SOUTH LEBANON IF LEBANESE WANT IT. US SEES UN PRESENCE AS BEST GUARANTEE AGAINST RENEWAL OF FIGHTING.

WSJ -- BOB KEATLEY FROM DAMASCUS

LEAD: "AMERICAN PEACE-SEEKING MISSION TOUCHED TWO MORE MIDEAST COUNTRIES, BUT WHETHER IT'S MAKING ANY POLITICAL PROGRESS REMAINS AS UNCERTAIN AS EVER. AN IMPORTANT TEST WILL COME HERE IN SYRIA, WHERE ASSAD IS HIGHLY SKEPTICAL OF ISRAELI INTENTIONS AND THEREFORE OFFERS COMPROMISE WITH GREAT RELUCTANCE."

OTHER POINTS:
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-- WORKING GROUP PROPOSAL MAY BE RECEIVING MORE PUBLIC ATTENTION THAN IT DESERVES. AFTER SPENDING 20 MINUTES OF 5-HOUR TALKS ON THAT SUBJECT, SADAT VOLUNTEERED IT AT PRESS CONFERENCE, MAKING IT MAIN SUBJECT OF ATTENTION.

-- VANCE WAS SURPRISED BY EMPHASIS IT GOT; THERE ARE INDICATIONS HE MAY HAVE BEEN ANNOYED.

-- SADAT TALKS MAINLY DEVOTED TO BASIC MIDEAST ISSUES, NOTABLY A PEACE CONFERENCE AGENDA. DETAILS OF THESE CONVERSATIONS UNKNOWN; VANCE PRESUMABLY DOESN'T WANT TO COMPLICATE HIS DIFFICULT MEDIATING TASK BY PUBLIC STATEMENTS.

-- WORKING GROUP IDEA IS EGYPTIAN PROPOSAL WHICH VANCE NOW TRYING TO SELL TO OTHER ARABS. ISRAEL HAS ALREADY ENDORSED IT.

-- ASSAD IN PARTICULAR HAS INSISTED THAT PLO BE REPRESENTED IN PEACE TALKS. WORKING GROUP PROPOSAL WHICH EXCLUDES PLO UNLIKELY TO PLEASE HIM.

-- CHIEF MERIT OF IDEA IS THAT IT PROVIDES APPEARANCE OF PROGRESS. US OFFICIALS THINK IT WOULD HAVE A SHORT LIFE UNLESS EARLY PROGRESS MADE ON SUBSTANCE. PROBLEM FOR NOW IS JUST TO GET TALKS STARTED.

-- IN LEBANON, VANCE OFFERED LEBANESE \$125 MILLION (SIC) OVER 3 YEARS TO REBUILD ARMY, PLUS \$43 MILLION IN ECONOMIC AID.

CSM -- DAN SOUTHERLAND FROM DAMASCUS
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LEAD: "ANNOUNCEMENT OF PLANS FOR A MIDEAST 'WORKING GROUP' AT THE LEVEL OF FONMINS THAT WOULD MEET IN THE US IN SEPTEMBER MAKES IT UNLIKELY THAT A GENEVA PEACE CONFERENCE COULD CONVENE IN OCTOBER, SAY DIPLOMATS CLOSE TO THE

CURRENT TALKS BETWEEN SECSTATE VANCE AND MIDEAST LEADERS."

OTHER POINTS:

-- OCTOBER DATE HAD BEEN ENDORSED BY BEGIN, SADAT, AND CARTER, BUT VANCE SAID AT PRESS CONFERENCE THERE WAS NO DEADLINE OF OCTOBER.

-- WORKING GROUPS WOULD HAVE ADVANTAGES OF GIVING APPEARANCE OF MOMENTUM TOWARD PEACE AND BRINGING PARTIES TOGETHER

AT PRELIMINARY STAGE WHERE PLO ISSUE COULD BE POSTPONED.

-- ASSAD'S ASSENT PROBLEMATICAL.

-- VANCE AND SADAT DECLINED TO DISCUSS PUBLICLY THEIR
"DIFFERENCES," BUT AL AHARAM REPORTED EGYPT HAD TURNED DOWN
US PROPOSAL FOR ISRAELI WITHDRAWAL, PLO PARTICIPATION AND
ESTABLISHMENT OF NORMAL RELATIONS. US OFFICIALS CONFIRMED
SADAT HAD REJECTED SOME PROPOSALS, BUT SAID OTHERS HAD
FOUND FAVOR.

CHRISTOPHER

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